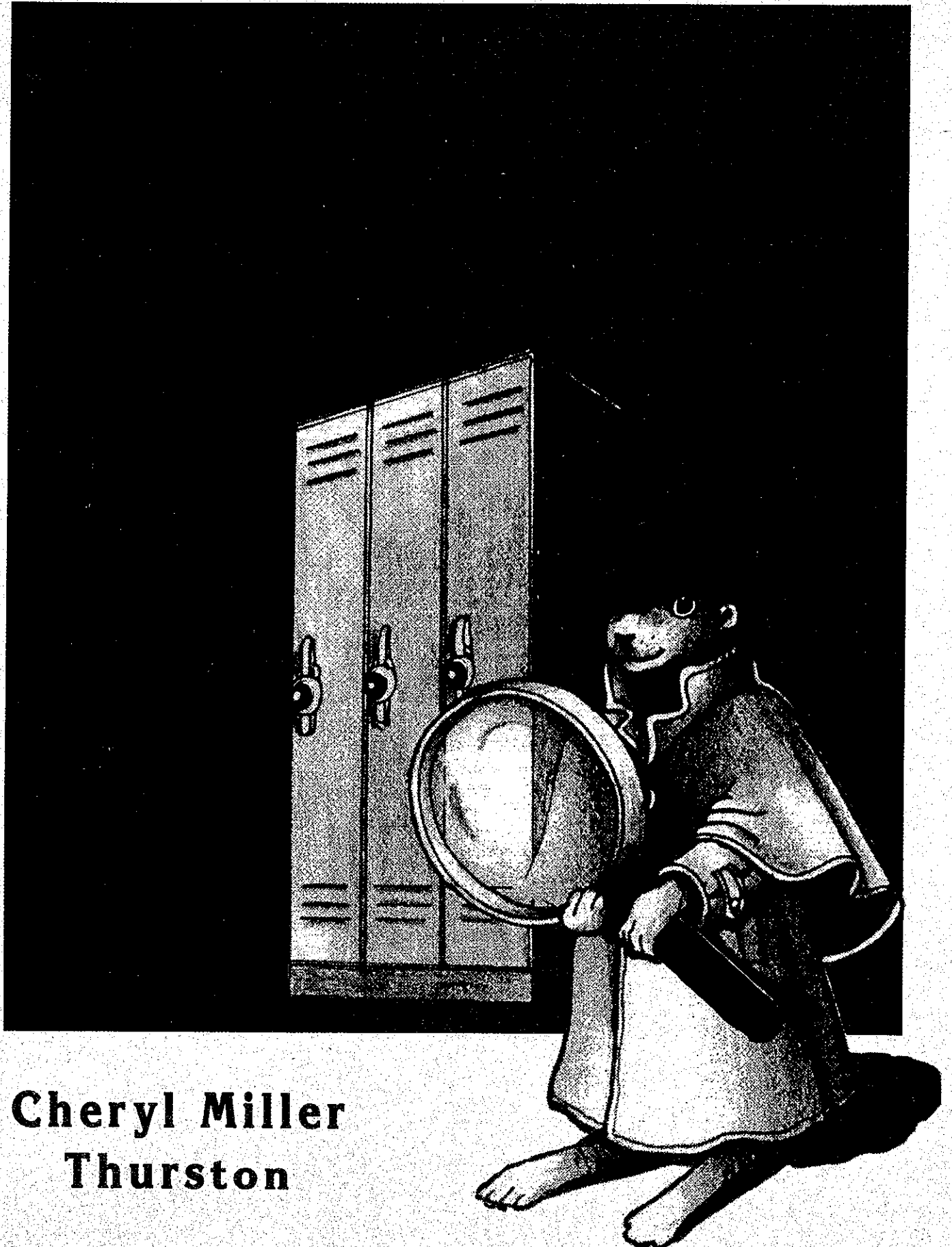


A play to read aloud in class



**Cheryl Miller
Thurston**

MYSTERY OF THE SUFFOCATED SEVENTH GRADER

Cheryl Miller Thurston

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MYSTERY OF THE SUFFOCATED SEVENTH GRADER

CHARACTERS

Narrator #1

Narrator #2

Mr. Nolan, the assistant principal

Mrs. Martinez, the school secretary

Police Officer

Students: Liz
Scott
Tina
Tom
Tony
Carolyn
Shelly
Bill
Perry Paulson



NARR. #1: Liz and Scott, two ninth graders, are walking down the hall after school. They see Perry Paulson, a seventh grader, standing at his open, empty locker.

LIZ: Hi, Shrimp.

PERRY: Hi, Ugly.

SCOTT: Are you two always this nice to each other?

LIZ: No. Sometimes we don't speak at all. He's my next-door neighbor.

PERRY: Unfortunately.

LIZ: Unfortunately for *me*. You wouldn't believe the things he has done. It's a miracle I still have my sanity.

PERRY: By the way, you're going to be getting a phone call, Liz.

LIZ: (*Warily*) From who?

PERRY: Gilbert Flescher. I told him you like him and want to go to the dance with him on Friday.

LIZ: You *what*?

PERRY: He seemed pleased. Very pleased.

SCOTT: (*Surprised*) Gilbert Flescher? You like Gilbert Flescher?

LIZ: Don't be ridiculous! Perry, one of these days I'm going to strangle you . . . or worse, I'll . . . I'll . . . I know. Grab him, Scott.

NARR. #2: Scott grabs Perry by the shoulders and holds on to him.

SCOTT: Okay. Now what?

LIZ: Put him in the locker.

NARR. #1: Scott stuffs the squirming Perry into a locker, the tall old-fashioned type. Liz slams the door.

LIZ: There. That ought to fix you.

PERRY: (*From inside the locker*) You're going to regret this!

LIZ: No, I'm going to *enjoy* this. Goodbye, Shrimp.

SCOTT: Do you really want to leave him in there?

LIZ: (*Shrugging*) I guess we'll have to. I don't know his combination.

PERRY: (*Calling from inside his locker*) Twelve — twenty-three — thirty.

LIZ: (*Smiling sweetly*) I don't hear anything. Do you, Scott?

SCOTT: Uh . . . Not a thing.

LIZ: Well, see you around, Shrimp. That is, if you ever get out of there.

NARR. #2: Laughing, Liz walks down the hall. Scott follows uncertainly.

NARR. #1: In a few minutes, Tina and Tom approach.

PERRY: Help! Help!

TINA: Did you hear that?

TOM: Yes. Where's it coming from?

PERRY: Help! Help! I'm in here!

TINA: In where?

PERRY: In here — locker thirty-four.

TOM: You're kidding. How did you get there?

PERRY: Who cares how I got here? Just get me out. I have claustrophobia.

TINA: Okay, okay. What's your combination?

PERRY: Twelve — twenty-three — thirty.

TINA: It won't open.

PERRY: Try again.

TINA: It's no use. It's jammed.

TOM: Mr. Nolan has a master key. We'll go get him.

PERRY: All right. But *hurry!*

NARR. #2: Tina and Tom hurry to the assistant principal's office.

TINA: Excuse me, Mr. Nolan, but there's a kid locked in locker thirty-four.

**MR.
NOLAN:** A what?

TINA: A kid.

**MR.
NOLAN:** How did he get there?

TOM: We don't know. We were just walking by and heard him yelling.

**MR.
NOLAN:** I'll *bet* you don't know. Listen, Tom. If this is another one of your stunts

TOM: It isn't, Mr. Nolan. Honest. I had nothing to do with it.

MRS.

MARTINEZ: I asked you to run this to the gym.

TINA: Oh . . . oh, sure.

MRS.

MARTINEZ: Take your books. The bell's going to ring soon, and you won't have time to come back.

NARR. #2: Tina walks slowly down the hall, looking sick. She delivers the message to the gym and goes to another classroom to wait for Tom.

NARR. #1: The bell rings, and she sees Tom come out of the classroom.

TINA: Tom, I've got to talk to you.

TOM: What's up?

TINA: You won't believe this. You know that little kid who was in the locker yesterday?

TOM: Sure. The one Mr. Nolan was going to take his time rescuing.

TINA: Well, he *did* take his time, Tom. The kid *died!*

TOM: Come on, Tina. Be serious.

TINA: I am serious. He suffocated! I heard Mr. Nolan talking on the phone. He didn't get to him in time. Mr. Nolan *killed* him!

NARR. #2: Scott walks up to Tina and Tom.

SCOTT: Mr. Nolan killed who?

TINA: A little kid named Perry Paulson.

SCOTT: Oh, I met him yesterday. Only it was *Liz* who wanted to kill him then. I guess he just drives everyone nuts. (*He smiles.*) Do you know what we did? We stuffed him in his locker and closed it and left him there.

TINA: So *you* were the one.

NARR. #1: Liz walks up to the group.

SCOTT: Actually, it was Liz who got the idea of shutting him in a locker. Right, Liz?

LIZ: It served him right. That little brat is the most annoying thing I've ever

TINA: Stop it. Don't be disrespectful to . . . to the dead.

NARR. #2: There is silence as the others look at Tina, puzzled.

LIZ: What do you mean, "the dead?"

TINA: He died, Liz. We told Mr. Nolan he was there, but he waited too long to get him out. Perry suffocated.

SCOTT: Stop kidding around.

TINA: I wouldn't kid about a thing like that. I heard Mr. Nolan talking about it on the phone. Believe me, Perry Paulson is dead.

LIZ: Then why haven't we heard about it?

TINA: Because Mr. Nolan isn't telling anyone. He put the body in a garbage bag and threw it out. He's going to tell the parents he doesn't know where the kid is. He's going to tell them he probably ran away.

SCOTT: Liz, we were the ones who locked him up. That means we're . . . we're murderers!

LIZ: But I didn't mean to kill him. I only meant to pay him back. I knew someone would hear him yelling and let him out. I thought the custodian would be around even if no one else was. I didn't mean to kill him.

TINA: You didn't kill him. Mr. Nolan is the one responsible. He's the one who didn't go get him when he should have. Mr. Nolan really killed him.

NARR. #1: Tony walks up to the group.

TONY: Mr. Nolan killed who?

SCOTT: Perry Paulson. A seventh grader.

TONY: How? Did he scare him to death by yelling at him? Boy, that man can yell. I ought to know.

SCOTT: No, he really *did* kill him. The kid *died*!

TONY: What? How?

TINA: He suffocated. And Mr. Nolan doesn't want anyone to know, so he stuffed the body in a garbage bag.

NARR. #2: Carolyn approaches the group.

CAROLYN: What's up? Why so serious looking?

TONY: Mr. Nolan strangled a seventh grader and stuffed him in a garbage bag.

CAROLYN: (*Smiling*) Big, bad Mr. Nolan.

TONY: No, I'm serious. They say he really did.

CAROLYN: Don't be ridiculous. Who did he supposedly strangle?

TONY: Perry Paulson.

CAROLYN: Oh, well, he *deserved* to be strangled. Do you know what he told Gilbert Flescher?

LIZ: Let me guess. He told him you want to go to the dance with him.

CAROLYN: How did you know?

LIZ: It doesn't matter. And he didn't strangle him. He

NARR. #1: The bell rings.

CAROLYN: We're late.

TINA: Let's all meet back here next period. We've got to decide what to do.

NARR. #2: The students all hurry to class.

NARR. #1: At the end of the next period, they meet again.

TINA: I've decided the first thing we've got to do is find the body.

SCOTT: You mean . . . ?

TINA: Yes, we've got to go search through the dumpster.

CAROLYN: How awful!

TINA: We can't prove anything against Mr. Nolan unless we find a body.

TONY: And if we find the body, then the police can prove he was strangled.

TOM: And then Nolan will go to prison.

NARR. #2: Shelly joins the group.